

Colorado Academic Standards: Visual Art Benchmarking Report Summary



COLORADO
Department of Education

Introduction

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) remains committed to providing rigorous academic standards to the highest quality. The Colorado Academic Standards in Visual Art were approved by the Colorado State Board in 2009. CDE has requested third-party experts conduct a formal study to identify the quality of the Visual Art standards being implemented since the 2009 school year, and to determine how and to what degree Colorado's current Visual Art standards compare with the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS), as well as the Visual Art standards of higher-performing states and countries.

The Colorado Department of Education engaged the services of the State Education Agency Director of Arts Education (SEADAE) to conduct an external review benchmarking the Colorado Academic Standards in Visual Art against the National Core Arts Standards, Arizona Academic Standards in the Arts, Delaware Content Standards for Visual and Performing Arts, and the K-12 Create Arts Continuum, a syllabi developed by the Board of Studies, State of New South Wales (Australia).

The Colorado Department of Education approached SEADAE for the review of the Colorado Academic Standards in Visual Art because of its history of high-quality work involving arts education standards, assessment, and instruction, as well as the deep content expertise of its members. SEADAE members are those persons at state arts education agencies who are charged with oversight of educational policy and practice in the arts (Dance, Media Arts, Music, Drama/Theatre Arts, and Visual Arts).

Methodology (p. 6-11)*

The Standards Review involved two components: A review of the internal quality of the Colorado Academic Standards in Visual Arts with respect to the degree of rigor, depth, breadth, and coherence; and a review and comparison of external referent standards to identify similarities and differences in organization, structure and content of the Standards. The method of review of the CAS for Visual Arts was to analyze individual grade levels in each of the Standards for Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) which support learner development. This was completed and reported in grade level bands for PreK-8 and one level of High School. The elements of the standards identified for review include: Academic Standards for Visual Art, Prepared Graduate Competencies; High School Expectations; Grade Level Expectations; and Evidence Outcomes. While important to understanding the current CAS standards, the following elements in the standards were not included: 21st Century Skills and Readiness Competencies; Inquiry Questions, and the Nature of the Discipline.

Colorado Academic Standards in Visual Art Review: A review of the internal quality of the Colorado Academic Standards in Visual Art with respect to the degree of rigor, depth, breadth, and coherence of the Standards. A four-point rating scale was used (3-Strong, 2-Moderate, 1-Weak, 0-Not Found). Rating were found for each of the following:

- Rigor – “...instruction, schoolwork, learning experiences, and educational expectations that are *academically, intellectually, and personally challenging...*”
 - Active language for learners to demonstrate declarative and procedural knowledge and skills
 - Developmentally appropriate
 - Enable and encourage students to build upon prior knowledge and transfer or adapt appropriate grade-level constructs to new situations, thereby fostering creativity and adaptive innovation
 - Promulgate age appropriate arts literacy and fluency
- Depth – “...robust, well-integrated understandings of fundamental concepts essential to the attainment of literacy and fluency music...”



- Deep investigation and multiple perspectives
- Deep investigation of developmentally appropriate literacy and fluency
- Reinforce and revisit core concepts and transfer of prior knowledge
- Promote inquiry-based learning
- Specific learning objectives with levels of student mastery
- Breadth – “...a logically scaffolded and sequenced set of standards in which essential content is explored through a wide array of interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives.”
 - Build learner knowledge and skills through a variety of related experiences over time
 - Provide interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives
 - Continuum of knowledge and skills necessary for progressively sophisticated levels of literacy and fluency.
- Coherence – “...a progression of instruction in which each lesson builds on previous lessons, moving students from simpler concepts to more complex and challenging concepts from lower-level thinking to higher-level thinking as they progress through their education.”
 - Systematic, intentional progression of learning that builds on previous Standards, with a logical pathway for learning and mastery
 - Construction parallel to that of other standards and concurrent knowledge and skills required for mastery
 - Cognitive ability increases for content mastery

Arizona, Delaware, National Core Arts Standards, and State of New South Wales (Australia): CDE selected external referents to which the CAS in Visual Art would be compared. Included in the selection criteria was (1) the time of the adoption/adaptation of these standards, as CDE was looking for recently adopted/updated standards, (2) relevance and coherence of the content-area learning objectives, (3) suggestions from the CDE staff, and (4) consistent use by other experts in the field. Analysts used a four-point rating scale (Very Similar, Similar, Dissimilar, or Very Dissimilar) when comparing CAS-Visual Art to the referents, along with the lenses of rigor, depth, breadth, and coherence.

Findings & Recommendations

Overall Findings

A substantial number of the existing GLEs are broad, sweeping statements of intent that do not necessitate action and are not written in measurable language; they fail to identify where students' knowledge and skills should fall along a continuum. Additionally, there is an apparent lack of consistency and “voice” (i.e., parallel language, coherence) with respect to the flow of the Standards from grade to grade and across grade-band clusters. The GLEs for Standards 1, 2, and 4 in Visual Art were written as statements of fact and do not explicitly spell out expectations for student learning. This made evaluation of the Standards for rigor, depth, breadth, and coherence difficult. Perhaps making the GLEs more verb-driven would help to ameliorate the issue. The Standards were especially weak at the High School level, because there was no differentiation for student expectation based on years of study or career pathway selected.

The grade cluster of PK-2 GLEs minimally address an instructional scope and sequence for describing the creative process. Missing from this concept are the experimentation and planning prior to the act of creation and the refinement and consideration for next steps following the creation of a work. The Pre-K learning target provides little specificity regarding what is developmentally appropriate for very young children. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the focus of Pre-school art should be on the creative process, rather than on the production of a product (NAEYC). The other grades appear to be developmentally appropriate.

Standard 1 appeared to focus on exploring how Visual Arts integrates expression, feelings, stories, human experience, point of view, intent, purpose, and communication. Standard 2 appears to focus on exploring art from different people, places, and times; as well as understanding symbols, visual metaphors, interpretations, and the value of critiquing one's



own work and the work of others. In Standard 3 the entire creative process was evident. Standard 4, like Standard 2, appears to focus on exploring art for self, family, friends, community, and on the contexts of history and culture. Critical thinking and reflecting strategies are employed to evaluate art. It is notable—by omission—that no mention is made of sharing or presenting art. This idea may be implicitly understood by the Standards writers, but is not explicitly stated in the GLEs of the Standards.

Comparing CAS in Visual Art to NCAS Visual Art Standards

The review compared CAS Standards to NCAS Artistic Process and PGCs to Anchor Standards and found them similar. Dissimilar is that CAS are backwards designed and NCAS are designed sequentially forward. NCAS has three HS proficiency levels which are geared toward student achievement. The reviewer states that while similar in intent, CAS HS GLEs are about instruction rather than student achievement. The review compared GLEs to Performance Standards which are similar in organization but dissimilar in grain size, content, rigor, breadth, depth and coherence. The review compared EOs to Model Cornerstone Assessments and found them dissimilar as EOs are more of a formative nature. (EOs as assessment were not the intention of the CAS writers.) The review finds a lack of presenting and sharing works of art, art as well-being, and art as community engagement in the CAS.

Comparing CAS in Visual Art to New South Wales Syllabi

The reviewer finds the CAS in Visual Art to be similar to New South Wales Syllabi. Differences are that PGCs are not the same across all arts areas as the Values and Attitudes are. Key Competencies are more descriptive than PGCs. EOs and Indicators are similar, however the NSW syllabi establishes a stronger correlation between Objectives and Indicators than the CAS do between GLE and Evidence Outcomes.

Delaware and Arizona comparisons to CAS in Visual Art

Delaware adopted the NCAS therefore the comparison is similar to the NCAS review. However, Delaware Visual Arts educators developed I CAN Statements to describe NCAS Performance Standards in developmentally appropriate student language that will serve as learning progressions.

Arizona adapted the NCAS with over 15% changes including Fine Arts with Career and Technical Education as one of twenty-two credits for graduation and also in providing clarification to the NCAS by adding instructional samples. Colorado has the District Sample Curriculum Project and the Assessment Resource Bank that serve a similar purpose. Arizona also simplified the NCAS language.

Observations for Consideration

The Review Team recommends that glossary links be embedded in all Standards documents so users have definitions “at the ready.” While consensus may vary among practitioners, interpreting terms *as the writers intended* is crucial to understanding and applying Standards and GLEs.

The members of the Review Team fervently believe that shaping Standards through the lenses of rigor, depth, breadth, and coherence will result in materials that guide curriculum and instruction, and that teachers and students can embrace as a roadmap to arts literacy and fluency.

Delaware and Arizona simplified and used developmentally appropriate student language that Colorado should consider.